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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001510

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPKO](#) [ET](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: POSITIVE MESSAGE ON THE EEBC PROCESS,
BUT FEARS OF RENEWED CONFLICT

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1275
[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 908
[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 895

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Prime Minister Meles and other senior officials expressed their deep concern to the Ambassador over the November 30 deadline set by the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) for final demarcation of the border by "coordinates." The GOE wants to avoid another border war with Eritrea, but raised fears that if the international community, especially the European Union, uses the EEBC's November 30 demarcation deadline to pressure the parties to act, it may precipitate renewed conflict. GOE officials urge caution in addressing the November 30 deadline, a similar message noted during recent briefings for the diplomatic corps (septel) by acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE SRSG)

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Ambassador Azouz Ennifar. The Ambassador urged the GOE not to drop out of the EEBC process. The GOE leadership does plan to send a positive letter to UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon reiterating the GOE's acceptance of the EEBC decision as final and binding as well as commitment to work with the Witnesses to the 2000 Algiers Agreement on the demarcation process. END SUMMARY.

NOVEMBER 30 DEADLINE: A CRISIS IN WAITING

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Over the past two weeks, Prime Minister Meles, Foreign Minister Seyoum, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tekeda, MFA Counselor for Legal Affairs Menelik Alemu and acting UNMEE SRSG Ambassador Ennifar discussed with Ambassador their concerns about the EEBC decision to finalize the demarcation of the border by "coordinates." The GOE and UNMEE note the EEBC decision contradicts the EEBC Commissioners, guidance to the parties for physical demarcation, and agreements by the parties on final placement of the demarcation pillars. The abrupt change from "physical" demarcation to demarcation by "coordinates" may reflect frustration by the EEBC, but it could precipitate renewed conflict, according to Tekeda and Menelik. Menelik, who served as one of the Ethiopian representatives to the

2006 EEBC meetings in London, noted Eritrea's rejection of the EEBC's November 30 deadline declaration. Menelik stated emphatically that if the international community pressed the parties to abide by this decision and immediately act to demarcate the border, this could potentially lead to renewed conflict.

13. (S/NF) GOE officials echoed to the Ambassador a common theme that the European Union/European Commission in particular is hostile to Ethiopia, as demonstrated by their warm reception of Eritrean President Isaias and unconditioned grant to Eritrea, despite Eritrea's arms shipments to extremists in Somalia and Sudanese rebels. Some GOE officials privately expressed to the Ambassador whether renewed openness to Eritrea by the Europeans was an effort to engage Isaias or counter U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa.

HOW TO APPROACH THE NOVEMBER 30 DEADLINE

14. (S/NF) GOE senior officials recommended caution when addressing the November 30 deadline. While Tekeda and Menelik rejected the EEBC's decision as dangerous, open expression of such sentiments could raise bitter public debate. Menelik, in particular, urged quiet diplomacy. He related that during Ethiopia's participation in the EEBC talks in London, his own colleagues focused criticism on him for Ethiopia's decision to re-enter the EEBC talks. The Ambassador urged GOE officials not/not to drop out of the EEBC process but to remain committed to a peaceful demarcation of the border. Further public comments on the November 30 deadline may not be helpful and may only raise heated and unhelpful debates. Ambassador Ennifar in May 10 and May 17 briefings to the diplomatic corps on the situation

ADDIS ABAB 00001510 002 OF 002

along the border (septel) echoed the same message of caution.

SENDING A POSITIVE MESSAGE

15. (S/NF) The GOE plans to send a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon reiterating Ethiopia's position

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of accepting the EEBC decision as final and binding and, more important, the GOE's continued commitment to work with the Witnesses to the Algiers Agreement of December 12, 2000 (i.e., Algeria, the AU, EU, US, and UN) on the demarcation process. In discussions with the Ambassador, GOE officials note that the following additional elements may be included in a letter to the UN Secretary-General:

(a) Reaffirm plan to submit a security plan, reminding the UN that such plans depend on unhindered UNMEE operations;

(b) Reaffirm Ethiopian commitment to pay any and all arrears to the EEBC;

(c) Reaffirm support for and importance of the Witnesses, noting the February 22, 2006 meeting of the Witnesses in New York;

(d) Reaffirm support for the efforts of the Witnesses on the importance of direct Eritrea-Ethiopia bilateral discussions to resolve the consequences of the demarcation process (divided towns and villages and potential refugee flows) and to normalize relations;

(e) Remind the UN that Ethiopia has not dropped out of the EEBC meetings;

(f) Remind the UN that Ethiopia allowed the opening (in Addis Ababa) of the UN office for the demarcation surveyors;

(g) Remind the UN that Ethiopia abides by UNSCR 1640, and that the focus of the resolution was on Eritrean actions;

(h) Call on Eritrea to renounce violence;

(i) Call on Eritrea to support and work with the Witnesses;

(j) Call on Eritrea to abide by UNSCR 1640.

¶6. (S/NF) COMMENT. We firmly believe that the potential for war will increase significantly if the Witnesses are not clearly united on a common position in addressing the November 30 EEBC deadline. Efforts to actively force the parties to demarcate without addressing the consequences of demarcation, would signal a departure from the commitment made by the Witnesses last year to promote peaceful demarcation as well as normalization of relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia. This could lead the parties to drop out of the EEBC process and increase the possibility of renewed conflict. Post stresses caution, impressing on the parties not to drop out of demarcation process and calling on the parties to reaffirm their commitment to the peaceful demarcation of the border. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO